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DIPLOMATE AMERICAN CHIROPRACTIC NEUROLOGY BOARD
FELLOW AMERICAN BOARD OF BRAIN INJURY AND REHABILITATION

Good Afternoon Chairpersons Gerratana, Somers, Steinberg, Ranking Member Betts and distinguished members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Dr. Jonathan Simmons. I am a Diplomate of the American Board of Chiropractic Neurology and a Fellow of the American Board of Brain Injury and Rehabilitation. I have spent the past 8 years studying Neurology and more specifically mild traumatic brain injury and treatment of concussions. I am here today to testify in support of House Bill 5291, an act concerning access to Information regarding the safety of sports helmets. There is some disturbing new research showing that cumulative small subconcussive hits are responsible for damaging the brains of our youth. While no equipment can prevent a concussion, any measure that we can take to reduce the force of these subconcussive hits is going to help reduce the cumulative damage to the brain.

Currently, the safety of softball and baseball masks are rated using a Severity Index (SI). The minimum passing score is currently set at 1200 Severity Index units. This recommendation was partially based on research completed in 1975 by Wayne State University. Much has changed since 1975 and there is a need for better equipment. We now know that small subconcussive hits cause measurable changes in the function of memory and reaction times in our youth. Any measure we can take to reduce the forces transmitted to the brains of our youth is a step in the right direction. Current law prohibits companies that are leading the forefront in developing new technology to reduce concussion and subconcussive forces from sharing their data.

This lack of transparency prevents parents and athletes from making informed decisions about choice of their equipment. How can a mother or father choose the most protective equipment without comparing safety ratings between different helmets? Parents have access to data to compare car safety ratings and the safety of other consumer products. At the current time parents are not allowed access to information concerning differences in impact forces between helmets.

As a healthcare provider that attends both youth and adult concussion patients that have suffered a concussion, I believe that passing House Bill 5291 will not only allow parents and athletes to make informed decisions about their equipment, but it will also encourage companies to manufacture more effective equipment to reduce the force of sub concussive trauma to the brain.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JWS', with a stylized, cursive script.

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